A MARSHALL CAVENDISH COLLECTION 5 IN FORTNIGHTLY PARTS

The Ancestral Trail

AN EPIC STORY OF MYTHS, MAGIC AND MONSTERS

5 Boltor, Bird of Thunder

Air Attack over Desert Wastes

UK £1.75 IR £1.75

Australia $4.50 NZ $5.50 Singapore $4.95 Malaysia MYR6.95 Malta £M1.50

From a story by Frank Graves

Julek Heller ®

On the Fifth Day . . .

A flight through air to withered land.
Beware the storm, the desert spanned.
A bone-filled grave awaits the brave
But hidden bounties save.
Within dark earth a lonely night
From skyborne spite at dreadful cost.
A hard-won treasure now is lost.

Each of the three felt a sickening lurch as they plummeted into the abyss. Wind roared in their ears as they sped faster and faster towards the ground. One moment Richard saw the misty depths for which they were heading. Next he saw, outlined against a dark sky, the ridge from which they had fallen – and behind it he saw a bird-like shape speeding towards them.

Then there was a thump. His chest felt as if it were gripped by iron bands. He looked down and saw huge, yellowed, horny fingers around his ribs. To his right he could see Orkan and Melek, slumped limply within a giant fist.

Plucked from the air

The three companions were still in the air, but they had been saved from their plummeting spiral. Then Richard felt a tickling on his skin. He looked up and saw feathers ruffling above him. His vision doubled, and he blacked out.

When he came to, Richard was on solid ground in a flat, hard desert dotted with spiky cactus plants. Nearby, Melek and Orkan rubbed their eyes groggily. Above Richard towered a giant bird.

"Don't be afraid," the bird said. "I know who you are. My name is Oganga and I am a friend. Like your companions, I escaped from the final battle and I have been searching for survivors." He paused, then added sadly, "There are not many of us."

"There are more than you think," Orkan broke in. "We have just come from the City of Stone. Juroot is free."

"I know, I have just left him," Oganga said. "But he and his troops were in trouble and fighting for their lives."

Enemy at the gates

"What?" Richard was horrified. "It all seemed fine when we left."

"Things were far from fine when I came along," Oganga said, shaking his head. Then he told them what had happened.

Giant earwig soldiers armed with sharp black pincers had marched on the city. Juroot and his troops had fought them as they poured through the gates. By the time Oganga had arrived there were dozens of corpses around Juroot's feet. Yet more soldiers came to take their place.

"Why didn't you stay and help?" Richard asked, furious at Oganga.

"I did – for a bit," Oganga replied, "but Juroot urged me to leave. He told me to catch up with you three, because your mission was more important than his. Lucky I took his advice."

"Yes. Thank you," Richard said, realizing that he had yet to thank Oganga for saving his life. Orkan and Melek also mumbled their gratitude.

Oganga nodded and said, "It's best to be on our way now. I'll fly on ahead to make sure it's safe."

Oganga took to the air, and the three moved off in the same direction on the ground. As they walked, Melek read aloud

from the *Book of Prophecies*. Richard shuddered when the dwarf reached the last line.

"A hard-won treasure lost," Richard repeated under his breath. Had he got the pod back just to lose it again so soon? He would have to be on his guard.

Desert Trek

On the horizon the clouds were dark and flashes of dry lightning tore up the sky. Once, a fireball shot from the sky and came bouncing across the ground towards them. When it passed near him, Richard felt his hair rise with the electric charge it carried. Then it careened away, leaving singed stones and a smell of burnt sand in its wake.

They pressed on across the dry wastes. Cocking his head to one side, Orkan asked suddenly, "What's that?"

Then Richard and Melek heard it too – a harsh roaring noise over a distant rumble and thud.

They spun round to face a low bank of red cloud rolling above the horizon. At centre-stage was the ominous black funnel of a tornado.

It was spitting up sand at its base and drawing huge rocks into its spiralling

height. They watched in horror as it sped towards them, a narrow, twisting rope that snaked from side to side like a giant whiplash joining earth and sky.

"We've got to get underground!" Orkan said urgently. "It's our only hope."

"But where? There's nowhere to go!" Melek wailed in despair.

"Over there," Richard pointed. "There's a small gully behind that line of scrub. It will have to do."

They ran desperately. Behind them the roaring grew in strength, and a fierce wind buffeted their backs. The three threw themselves into the hollow and curled up in tight balls on the ground.

Caught in a tornado

A blast of hot air and stinging sand tore angrily at the trio. The noise was deafening. Then the tornado was over the bank and into the gully.

Melek and Orkan disappeared from sight as if snatched by a giant hand. For a split second Richard found himself staring up into the heart of the tornado – a dark, dreadful tunnel that led to the heavens, its sides dotted with whirling lumps of stone and vegetation. Then he too was spinning helplessly – up and up towards the evil ochre sky.

Meanwhile, unaware of the devastation behind him, Oganga had flown far ahead to the mountains that bordered the desert. Suddenly, he spotted movement below and wheeling silently on his gigantic wings he spiralled down to investigate.

Battleworn survivors

Oganga found a group of battered birds huddled together on a ledge. He recognized them immediately as the outriders who had flown in his squadron during the final battle. The unit had been savaged. The birds were all wounded and one, Oganga reckoned, would not live more than a few days.

The birds poured out their tales of woe to Oganga. They told of injury, and of flight, and of the difficulty of hiding in a land now filled with enemy eyes. One tale drew Oganga's attention.

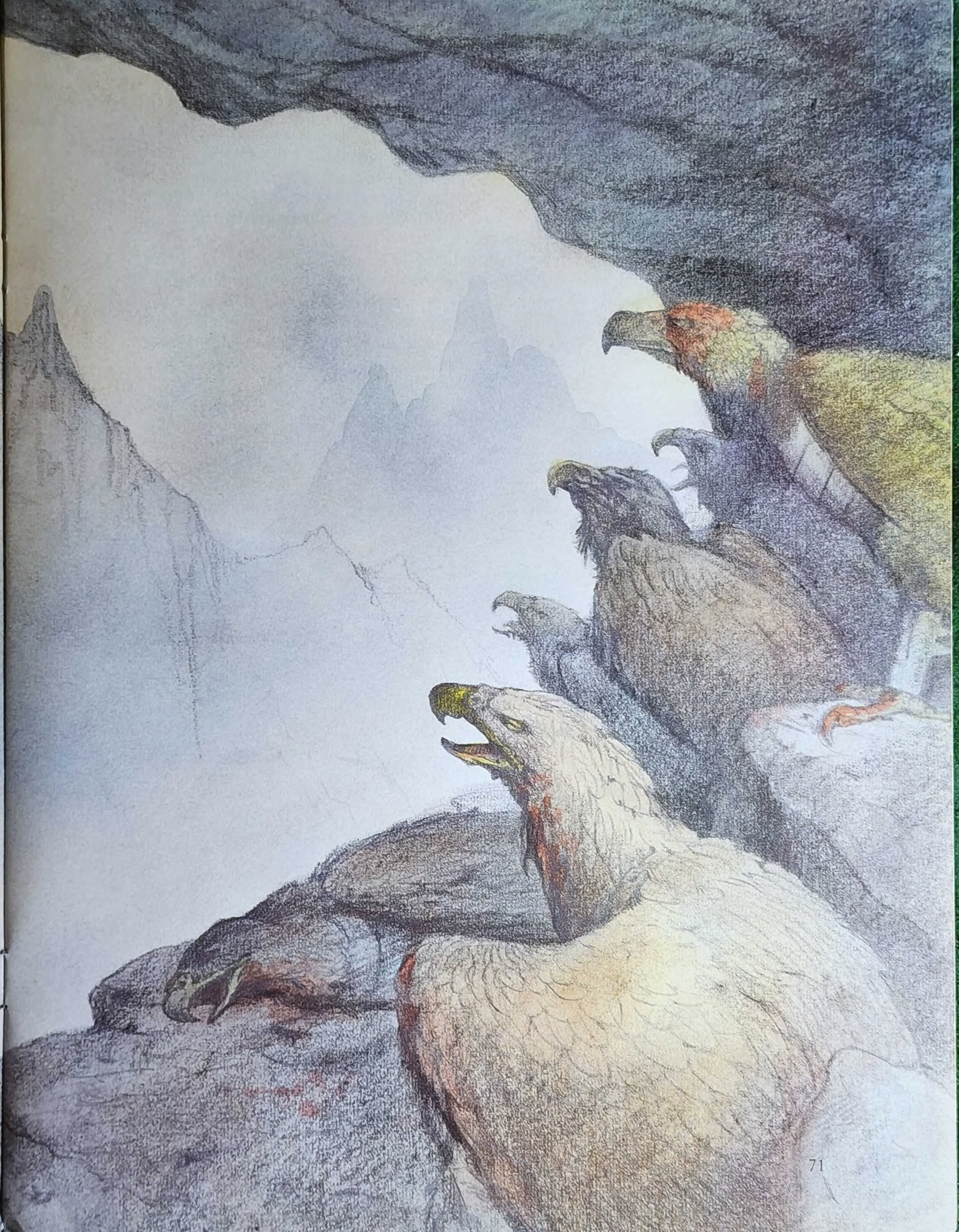
A badly scarred bird had heard that a Life-Force pod was hidden in the mountain lair of Enlil, a vicious bat-like creature in the Evil One's power. Enlil kept an army of slaves, and the bird had learned about the pod from an escaped prisoner. Before an execution, Enlil had taunted his victims with the pod and bragged that it would never be recovered.

Oganga then told his old comrades about Richard and his quest. "I must go back and tell him where the pod is. Good luck to you all," Oganga said, reluctant to leave them so helpless.

He took to the air and flew fast to tell Richard his news. His heart sank when he saw the tornado's track twisting across the desert. Rising high into the sky to increase his field of vision, Oganga began to quarter the land in a methodical search.

Stranded in the desert

As Oganga sped through the skies, the trio were finding their bearings. Their journey with the tornado had taken them far into the desert before the storm had finally stopped, stranding them in a remote spot. The wind-spout must have faded gradually, Richard thought, letting them down gently. Had it collapsed in mid-flow, with its burden still high in the air, they would have been splattered across the toasted landscape.



Richard now found himself in a shallow depression filled with skeletons – the remains, he guessed, of a terrible battle. Nearby, he saw Melek and Orkan heave themselves awkwardly from a crackling mass of bones.

As Richard walked towards the others, the heat beat at him in waves. He was amazed at how much he had been able to endure so far, but unless they found water soon, he thought they would die of thirst or be roasted alive.

"We're lucky," Orkan said when Richard told him of his fears. "Look over there."

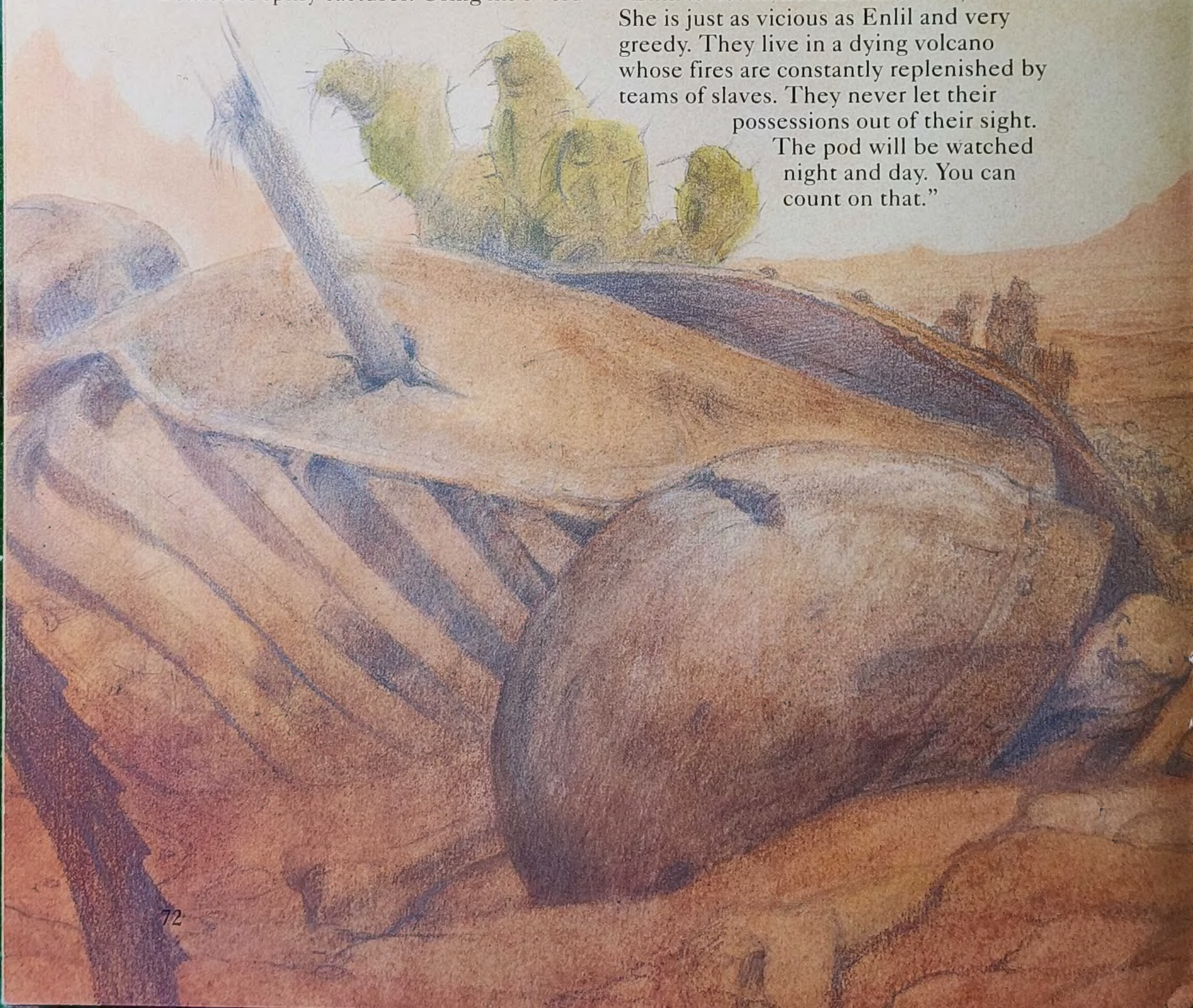
Through the heat shimmer, Richard saw a stand of spiky cactuses. Using his sword to split them open, Orkan revealed white watery pulp behind the prickles. As the three sucked out the liquid, they heard a pulse in the air. It was Oganga hurtling towards them. He came in fast, sending up clouds of sand as he landed.

A NEW CHALLENGE

"At last!" Oganga said with relief. "I've been searching everywhere for you!"

He listened as they told him about the tornado, marvelling at how well the three had come through their ordeal. Then he told them his good news.

"I have to warn you," Oganga finished, "Enlil is not alone. He has a wife, Erna. She is just as vicious as Enlil and very greedy. They live in a dying volcano whose fires are constantly replenished by teams of slaves. They never let their possessions out of their sight. The pod will be watched night and day. You can count on that."



"It doesn't matter," Richard shrugged. "We have to recover the pods wherever they are. If Enlil's got one, we have to get it back. That's all there is to it."

"Then I'd better take you there," Oganga said, as he seized them in his massive talons and took off.

They soared high into the air, rising in slow circles on the hot desert winds. Then, when Oganga judged the altitude to be correct, he banked and shot towards the mountainous horizon.

The hazy peaks of the Wolfkill Mountains grew gradually nearer and nearer. Soon they were gliding softly and with skilful elegance between the heavily wooded slopes.

Sky pirates

"We'll stop at the next peak," Oganga said, skimming smoothly over a saddle in the hills. "We could all do with a rest."

As he rose above the valley there came a raucous screeching and the sky filled with menacing hook-beaked shapes.

"Sky pirates!" Oganga exclaimed, swerving quickly one way, then the other. "They are vultures who don't even wait until their prey is dead before they go in and start to feed. Don't worry, we'll soon lose them."

Yet despite his strength, Oganga was unable to evade his attackers. The weight of Richard, Orkan and Melek slowed him down too much.

"I'll have to land," Oganga said, having dodged and curved in vain through the hills. "They're still on our tail. Brace yourselves."

Oganga came in fast and shallow over a scree-laden slope, releasing the trio just before touchdown. As they sprawled harmlessly across the rocks, the huge bird landed just beyond, in an untidy skid that

sent a clatter of rubble rattling down the hill. The vultures, caught off guard, peeled upwards in neat formation to regroup.

They massed in preparation for their next strike, then a much larger bird rose high above the group. As it spread its great shadowy wings, a bolt of lightning shot out from its sharply curved talons. The bolt streaked towards the three companions, but missed and singed a nearby outcrop.

Bird of thunder

"This is worse than I thought," Oganga said, recognizing the vultures' leader. "That is Boltor, Bird Of Thunder. His powerful thunderbolts can kill from a great distance. You must get under cover fast. You're not safe here, out in the open. Leave me to fight him in the air. I know his tricks and I've got a few of my own. Now go and hide, quickly."

As Oganga flew into battle, Richard clutched Golan's amulet. Immediately he sensed the Guardian's voice telling him to look across to a red bush. A low tree covered in fiery berries was hugging the ground to his right.

Hidden refuge

"This way!" Richard shouted, plunging towards the tree. Orkan and Melek followed, just in time to see Richard disappear through a small crevice that lay hidden beneath the tree's roots.

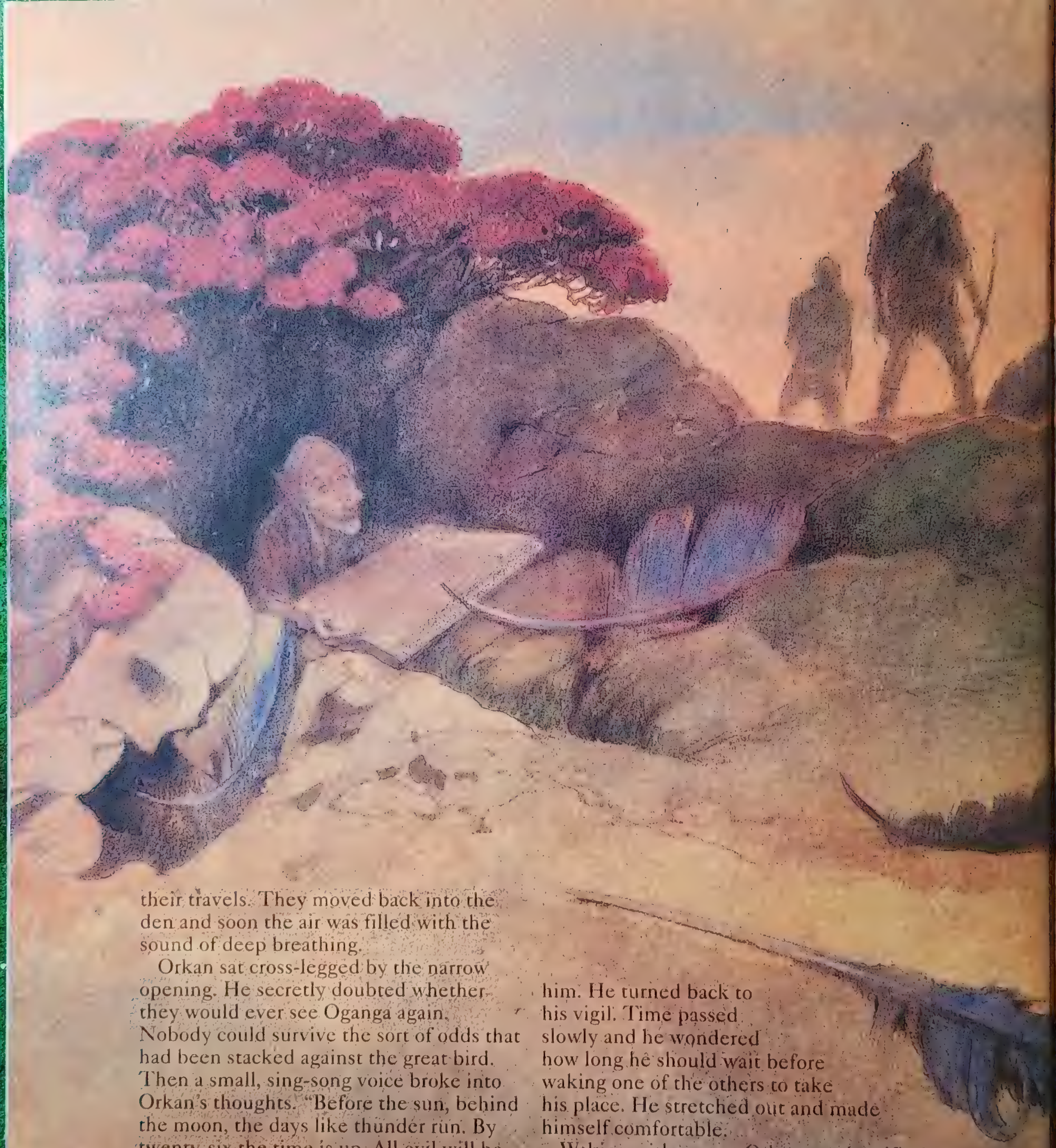
They wormed in after him and found themselves in a den. It must have been inhabited at one time, because a well-sooted fireplace stood in the middle of the floor, surrounded by a sprinkling of tiny bones, leftovers of many an ancient meal. Whoever had lived here was long gone, but the den provided a safe refuge for the three companions. There was no way their pursuers could follow them in here.

Huddled in their hideaway, they watched Oganga soar majestically against the dark rusty sky. He circled slowly above Boltor, then swooped down, faster than an arrow. Boltor flipped backwards, and jagged bolts of pure energy shot out from his talons. A loud explosion rent the air and lightning flashes lit up the sky.

Then Oganga tore down at the Bird of Thunder. Two steel-blue feathers whizzed at Boltor. A second later, Oganga's powerful talons were digging deep into his enemy's breast. The Bird of Thunder gave an ear-splitting screech and the two birds plummeted out of sight.

The three waited for a while, then Orkan broke the silence. "Let's get some sleep," he said. "There's nothing we can do. One of us can stand guard to keep an eye out for Oganga. We'll take it in shifts, starting with me."

Richard and Melek needed no prompting. They were exhausted from



their travels. They moved back into the den and soon the air was filled with the sound of deep breathing.

Orkan sat cross-legged by the narrow opening. He secretly doubted whether they would ever see Oganga again. Nobody could survive the sort of odds that had been stacked against the great bird. Then a small, sing-song voice broke into Orkan's thoughts. "Before the sun, behind the moon, the days like thunder run. By twenty-six the time is up. All evil will be done."

It was Melek, talking in his sleep. Orkan turned and stared at his wizened companion. The words meant nothing to him. He turned back to his vigil. Time passed slowly and he wondered how long he should wait before waking one of the others to take his place. He stretched out and made himself comfortable.

Waking with a start, Orkan was horrified to find that he had nodded off. Rising to his feet he peered cautiously out of the den. There was no sign of any birds. He ducked back inside and went to wake

Richard and Melek. While they rubbed sleep from their eyes, Orkan outlined the situation. He also repeated Melek's midnight ramblings in the hope that one or the other would be able to cast some light on their meaning.

Battle aftermath

Richard shook his head. "It sounds like one of the prophecies. We'll just have to wait and see what it means, though. The important thing now is the quest. If Oganga has not returned, there's no point in waiting here. For all we know he could be dead. I think we should move on."

The trio stepped out on to the hillside. Around them lay the signs of a fierce battle. Feathers littered the ground. The rocks were splattered with dried blood. On the topmost crags, patches of fresh stone showed where Boltor's thunder had exploded away from its target. Even the sky was a baleful shade of red. Yet there was no sign of any bodies.

Richard was appalled at the ferocity of the battle. "Let's hope Oganga is safe," he said. Then he set off along the slope, Melek and Orkan scrambling in his wake over the loose pebbles.

Richard decided it would be safest if they roped up, using the length that Melek still carried with him.

The further they went the steeper the slope became. Now the rope was invaluable

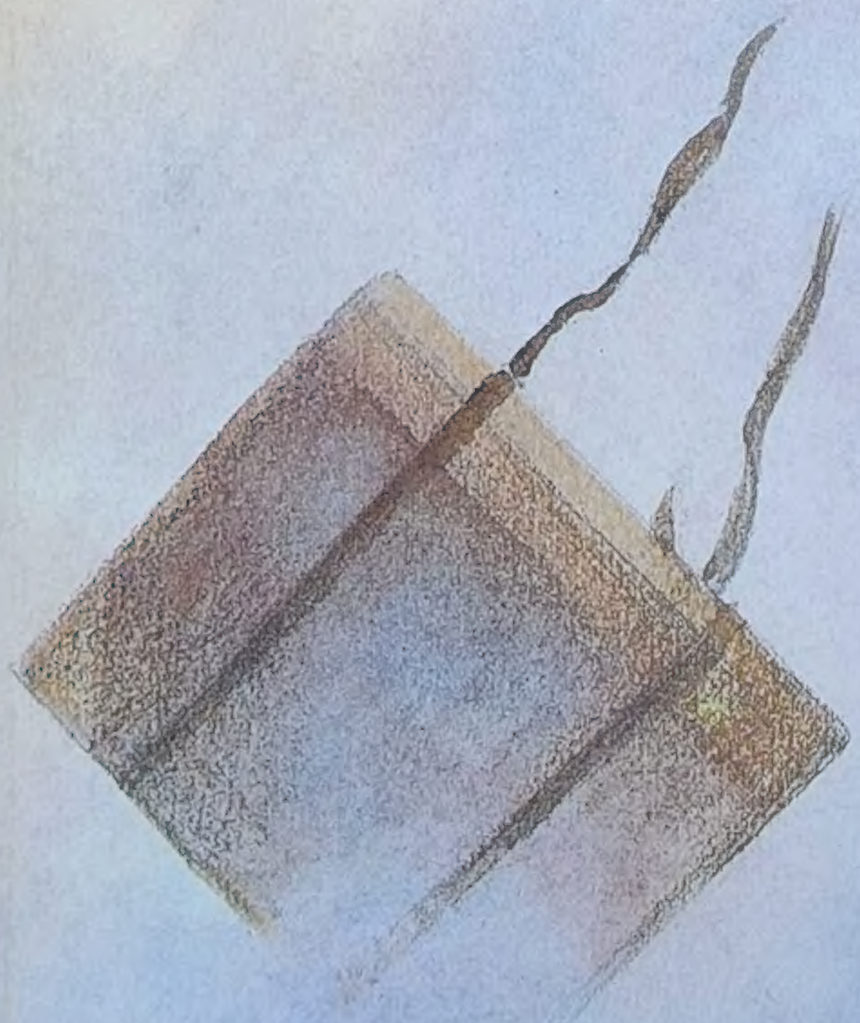
as they helped each other down the most difficult stretches. They were taking the most direct downhill route they could find but even so the wooded valley bottom seemed as far away as ever.

A TREASURE LOST

The three were inching along a narrow ledge towards what looked like an easier way down when Melek lost his footing. He scrambled desperately for a handhold, but in vain. He fell out into space.

Richard just had time to shout a warning for Orkan to hang on tight. Once again the rope showed its true worth. Bit by bit, Richard and Orkan hauled Melek back to safety.

Then, just as his fingertips grasped the ledge, there was a snap and the *Book of Prophecies* tumbled away down the mountain. It spun through the air, bouncing off the hillside in high, arching leaps. Then it was gone from sight. Finally a distant thud signalled that the book had come to rest. But where it might have landed was anybody's guess.



Shoomi's Sanctuary

Come into this ancient domain and use your powers of observation to find . . .

Shoomi and Shoobi

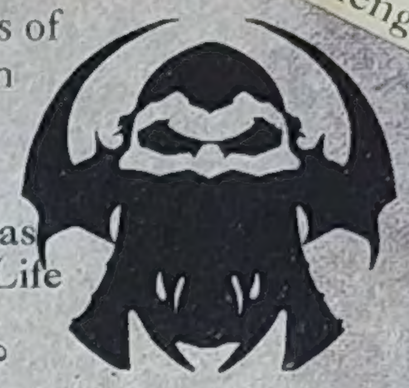
Look out for these friendly little creatures again. They are staying close on our heroes' trail and you will find them somewhere on the pages of this issue.

In issue 4, Shoomi and Shoobi got stuck in Cobweb Wood and appeared only on the inside front cover!

3-Minute Challenge

Mask of Evil

Can you find two fragments of the Evil One's mask hidden in the illustrations in less than three minutes?



In issue 4, Juroot's mace was hidden on page 51 and the Life Force pod was on page 64. Did you beat the challenge? If not try again this time!

As you read this issue, watch out for the clue that reveals which pod Richard recovered in issue 4.

Monsters and Magic

When you have read about Boltor, look at your cards from *Morbane's Book of Monsters and Magic.* Which of these creatures do you think Boltor is based on?

In issue 4, Zibella was based on Medusa.

Check your answers in the next issue.

Puzzle Map

Cut out the two puzzle pieces and fit them on to your Ancestral World map poster.

Competition

Find the source of the Evil One's power and win a prize.

Power of Evil

Cut out the three blocks of letters and keep them safe. When you have 26, you will be given a clue to help you form the letters into a phrase which tells you how to destroy the power of the Evil One.

Competition details will appear in future issues.

HOW TO CONTINUE YOUR COLLECTION

Most of our customers prefer to collect issues from their newsagent by placing a regular order. To help you collect THE ANCESTRAL TRAIL we are pleased to offer the following services:

DIRECT TO YOUR DOOR

Each issue costs £1.75 (IR £1.75). NB We offer a full subscription service in the UK. Issues are sent to your home POST FREE and will be dispatched to arrive on the day of publication.

SUBSCRIPTION

Each issue costs £1.75 (IR£1.75). NB We require a minimum order of 10 issues for subscription. POSTAGE IS FREE. Please mark your envelope THE ANCESTRAL TRAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS.

MISSING ANY ISSUES?

If you have missed any issues in your collection, we can supply them through our Back Numbers Dept. NB Orders are subject to availability.

BACK NUMBERS

Each issue costs £1.75 (IR£1.75) including p&p. Please mark your envelope THE ANCESTRAL TRAIL BACK NUMBERS.

HOW TO PAY

Payment should be made by cheque or postal order (made payable to Marshall Cavendish Partworks Ltd) to: MARSHALL CAVENDISH, MARLBOROUGH ROAD, ALDBOURNE, MARLBOROUGH, WILTSHIRE SN8 2HP. Telephone 0672 40776.

In the following countries, services are available as in the UK:

AUSTRALIA

Back Numbers Send cover price plus 95¢ p&h per issue to Gordon & Gotch Ltd, PO Box 290, Burwood, Victoria 3125.
Slipcase Send $13.95. Make cheques payable to Gordon & Gotch Ltd.

NEW ZEALAND

Back Numbers Send cover price to Gordon & Gotch (NZ) Ltd, PO Box 584, Auckland.
Slipcase Send $17.95.

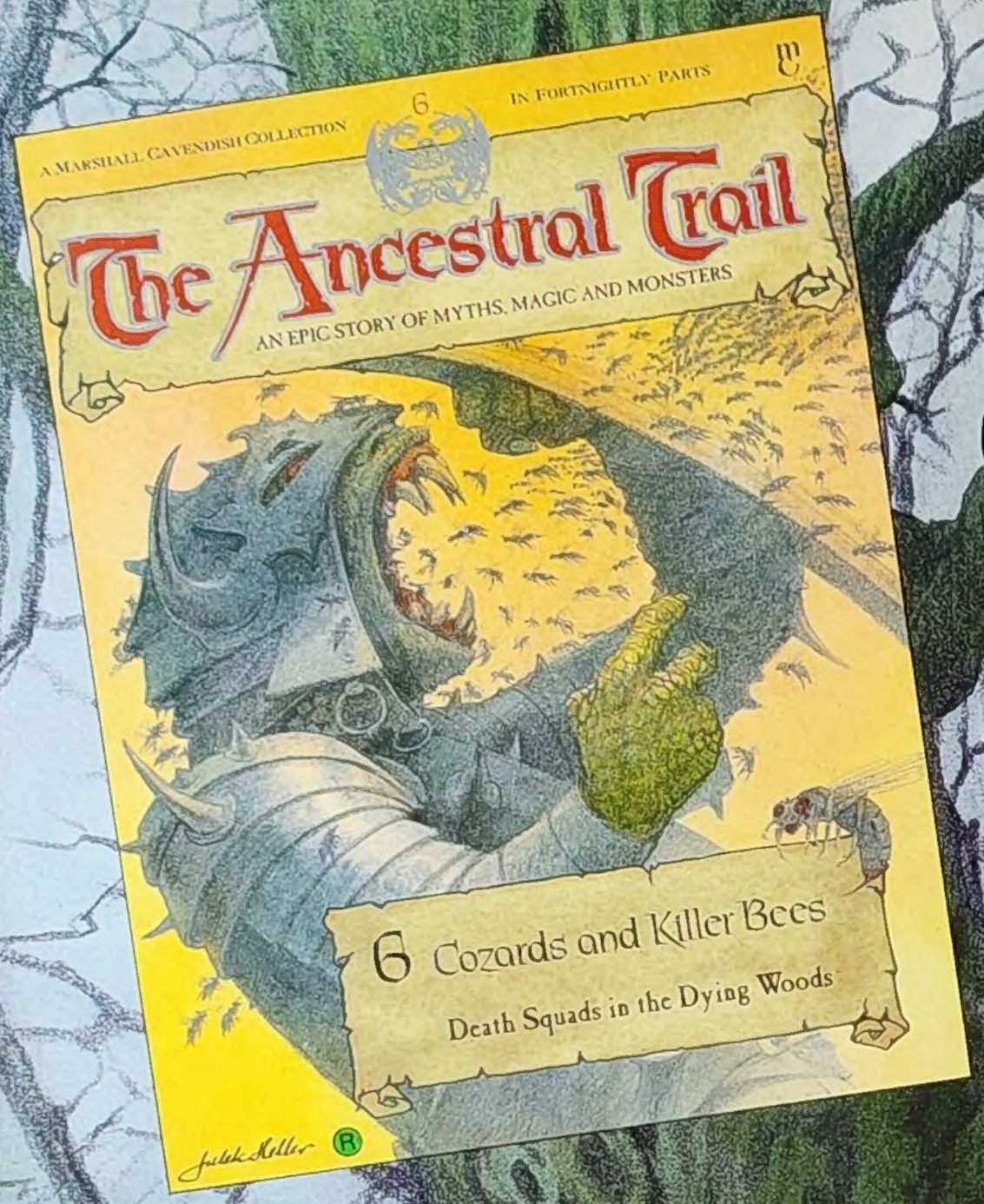
MALTA

Back Numbers and Slipcase Available through your newsagent.

SLIPCASE

You can order slipcases to preserve your copies of THE ANCESTRAL TRAIL. The slipcase holds 26 issues and costs £5.95 (IR£5.95) including p&p. Please mark your envelope THE ANCESTRAL TRAIL SLIPCASE.

© Marshall Cavendish Ltd & Frank Graves 1993 Published by Marshall Cavendish Partworks Ltd, 119 Wardour Street, London W1V 3TD
Colour by Lamplight Repro. Typeset by Litho Link Ltd. Printed in Great Britain.


A Marshall Cavendish Collection
6
In Fortnightly Parts
The Ancestral Trail
An Epic Story of Myths, Magic and Monsters
6 Cozards and Killer Bees
Death Squads in the Dying Woods
Julek Heller

In Issue 6

Cozards and Killer Bees

The Evil One's stormtroopers are on a search-and-destroy mission in Green Man Wood. Will our heroes manage to evade the Cozards' deadly tactics or will they have to battle it out?

plus

- Morbane tells us about the Green Knight's strange challenge to Sir Gawain, and talks about trees that speak and leaves that see.
- More tokens and locator cards for **The Ancestral Trail** role-playing game.

FREE

8 more Monster Might cards for **The Ancestral Trail** pack.

Coming in Issue 7

Zock, Cannibal Chief

In the Caves of Kanbala, the trio are captives of a vicious cannibal chief. Will they find themselves in the soup or could there be a worse fate in store?

plus

From Morbane – Cannibal Zim falls foul of his own greed and a wicked witch builds a fence out of bones • More map puzzle pieces.

ISBN 0-7485-4039-3
9 780748 540396